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Have questions about growth in Fremont?

- How does growth affect our property taxes?
- Does conserving special land save the town money long term?
- What can we do to guide future development in Fremont?

**Fremont Open Space Committee and
Fremont Conservation Commission
Invite You To:**

The Dollars and Sense Of Saving Special Places

Slide presentation presented by the Society for the Protection of New Hampshire Forests

**Dave Anderson, Naturalist SPNHF
Mike Speltz, Land Protection Specialist, SPNHF
Dijit Taylor, Director Center for Land Conservation Assistance, SPNHF**



Monday February 13, 2006 7:00 PM

Fremont Public Library

Free admission

Refreshments will be served



What is the Fremont Open Space Committee?

The Fremont Open Space Committee was formed in 2003 to advise the Fremont Conservation Commission on the best and most prudent ways to preserve natural spaces in Fremont. Its mission is to work to maintain the rural character of the town while balancing the financial and environmental wishes of the townspeople. The reasons for this goal are to preserve the character of our community, protect our water supply, and maintain our existing wildlife habitat.

What are the Responsibilities of the Fremont Open Space Committee?

The Fremont Open Space Committee provides information to the residents of Fremont about the benefits of preserving natural spaces. It identifies and prioritizes land in Fremont for possible protection, it acts as an advisor to landowners who are considering maintaining their land as open space and works with landowners who wish to transfer their development rights as part of a **conservation easement** or sell their land in order to permanently protect it. Most importantly The Fremont Open Space Committee works to raise funds by both proposing bond initiatives for the town budget and by writing grant proposals in an effort to receive funds from public or private third parties.

The Facts about Conservation Easements

A **conservation easement** also known as a **land protection agreement** is a practical way for land owners to protect environmentally significant land while retaining ownership of the land. A conservation easement can provide the solution to the dilemma that many Southern New Hampshire landowners are struggling with today: How to keep their land from being permanently altered by intensive development and suburbanization and yet capitalize on the property's increased value. The conservation easement can be used to establish a "win-win" plan that protects the important resources and features of the land while providing both financial and tax benefits to the property owner.

A conservation easement is essentially a contract between the landowner and an organization like The Forest Society in which the landowner relinquishes some or all the rights to develop the property. Contrary to what some people think, a conservation easement does not open up private property to public use. It is for the landowners to decide if they want to allow any public use of the property. In most cases, title to the property, along with the right of exclusive use and enjoyment, remain with the landowner.

In short, a conservation easement

- **Provides added rights and options for landowners giving them an opportunity to save their land and derive income from it.**
- **Allows landowners to retain ownership of their land and to use it as they always have.**
- **Allows landowners to sell the land if that is their desire**

Glen Oaks – A Fremont Open Space

Success Story

In December, 2005 the Town of Fremont completed a transaction that permanently protected a 336 acre parcel of land. This property known as Glen Oaks is a vast area consisting of roughly 336 acres of undeveloped forest land on the southern side of Spruce Swamp.

This project was made possible because of the combined efforts of the Open Space Committee, the Fremont Conservation Commission, and the Forest Society who worked together to put forth a bond proposal for the 2005 town meeting. The Fremont Conservation Commission, SPNHF and most importantly, private donors stepped up with enough money to buy an option on the property. This option held the land until the town meeting and stopped the immediate sale of the land to developers.

The level of trust demonstrated by all of the parties involved was inspiring. The owners trusted the Town to pass the bond; the town officials trusted the residents to see the value of this land; the private citizens who invested their own money trusted that the project could be completed and their money returned and the Forest Society trusted everyone to get the job done.

Although the 900 thousand dollar bond was passed, our work was not completed. We have promised the people of Fremont that we would do our best to further save the town money by applying for grants from third parties in order to offset the cost of the land. We received a 50 thousand dollar grant from the NH State Conservation Commission and a 20 thousand dollar grant from the NH Trails Bureau meaning that the entire cost to the town was 830 thousand dollars approximately \$2,589.00 per acre. This project proves positive that by working together we can both protect the rural character of our town and do it in a financially prudent manor.



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The Fremont Open Space Committee Natural Area Conservation Proposal Process

The Fremont Open Space Committee has developed a transparent and repeatable process that clearly delineates how properties are researched, valued, and funded. This process has been put into place in order to assure the residents of Fremont that the town's interests as well as the interests of Fremont's citizens are protected.

Step 1 – Proposal Initiation

Proposals for land conservation can come from various sources. Land owners can approach The Fremont Open Space Committee directly or they can speak with any other official town group such as the Board of Selectmen or the Planning Board where they will be directed to contact the Fremont Open Space Committee. Additionally, other conservation-minded groups such as Society for the Protection of New Hampshire Forests (SPNHF) can work with land owners and bring proposals to the committee.

Step 2 – The Predefined Criteria

The Fremont Open Space Advisory and the Fremont Conservation Commission have worked together to devise criteria that is used to rate the importance of land parcels. This criterion has been reviewed by professionals from SPNHF and the Rockingham County Conservation District in order to assure the validity of the document. Based on the score received the Open Space Committee can make a determination as to whether to proceed with the proposed project.

Step 3 - The Conservation Commission

The Conservation Commission is responsible for reviewing the proposal and if they feel that the proposal is viable, they arrange for a formal appraisal of the proposed piece of property so that a dollar amount can be attributed to the proposal. The Conservation Commission is responsible for utilizing its funds to pay for all or a portion of the cost associated with a professional third-party appraisal.

Step 4 – The Board of Selectmen

The entire proposal and the costs associated with the proposal are presented to the Board of Selectmen for review. The board conducts a formal public hearing in order to provide town residents with a venue for voicing opinions and gathering information about the proposal. At the end of this process the Board of Selectmen decide whether final approval for the project will be granted.

Step 5 – Land Trust Funding Options

Funding options are constantly being explored by the Fremont Open Space Committee and the Fremont Conservation Commission. These sources stem from many public and private groups and are usually available to towns as "matching fund" grants. In short what this means is that each dollar provided by the grantor must be matched dollar for dollar by the town. If the proper funding for the project is achieved then the easement is approved.

The entire proposal process as well as the criteria utilized to rate specific properties is available on the Fremont web site at <http://www.fremont.nh.gov>.

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c/o Fremont Conservation Commission
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Fremont, NH 03044

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